

# WHAT THE WAR COST FRANCE IN ART TREASURES

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THE last war cost France not only one million four hundred thousand human lives, entire cities, factories, mines, and buildings; it cost her also a part of her magnificent store of art treasures. And that part can never be restored to her. Houses are reconstructed, mines are reopened, factories are reorganized, and cities are rebuilt. Other men are born to take the place of those who have disappeared. But we cannot replace a cathedral ten centuries old, with the memories attached to it; we cannot replace a château of the Middle Ages, with the epoch that it calls to mind; nor can we replace the stained glass which was the work of the greatest artists of the Renaissance.

Frightful is the list of ruins of French art—as frightful, perhaps, as that of Rome or of Athens when sacked by the barbarians. It is this list which I wish to place before the eyes of the American public, which, more than any other, has always shown an affectionate respect and an enthusiastic admiration for the old historic monuments of France.

Almost a century ago—in 1832, to be exact—France officially, by law, put under the protection and the control of the state the most beautiful edifices of which the nation was proud. A service was created, the service of historic monuments, which, under the direction of the Minister of Fine Arts, was charged with the care of these edifices. All the projects and all the expenses are inscribed on the budget each year, and consequently are paid for by all the citizens.

Before the war almost a thousand artistic or historic monuments in France were thus placed under the surveillance and care of the Department of Fine Arts. Of these, two hundred and fifteen during the war have been either completely destroyed or seriously damaged; there is therefore, in considering only the figures, a decrease of more than a fifth in the art treasure of France; but the loss is even greater, for unfortunately some of the works destroyed contained what was of the highest value in art and in history.

Let us consider, in the first place, what has been totally wiped out, that which will never be able to live again, that part definitely lost to the patrimony of civilization.

To begin, we should cite the Château of Coucy, in the Department of the Aisne.

A great French architect who was also a great historian, Viollet-le-Duc, called the Château of Coucy "a veritable city, conceived in its *ensemble* and built by a single effort, dominated by a powerful will." This splendid château was, in fact, a whole little city, built in the thirteenth century on a height from which

can be seen on the horizon Laon, Noyon, and Chauny—thirty leagues of valley, of plain, and of forest. Behind the moat and the great towers there was a whole series of buildings—a Gothic chapel; a court-house, called the Hall of the Knights because it was ornamented with the statues of nine valiant knights; shops; stables; modest little houses for the officers and major-domos; and, finally, the dwellings of the master, he who was called the Sire de Coucy. All that was a marvelous restoration of a unique corner of the France of the Middle Ages, with its life, its habits, and its institutions. And all that has been annihilated, plowed over, pulverized by the heavy German shells that rained upon it; there remain just one fragment of the great round tower and the ruins of the ramparts. But, inside, the wreck and chaos are such that the Department of Fine Arts has been forced to give up any attempt even to clear away the *débris*. Of the Château of Coucy, whose principal parts were preserved during eight centuries, posterity will know only the enormous ashlar and the blocks of stone heaped up on top of one another.

The Château of Ham, in the Department of the Somme, older by a hundred years than the Château of Coucy, was somewhat smaller, but was not less glorious. It also was inclosed within enormous towers, one of which measured thirty-three meters in height and in diameter, and was behind a fortified trench. It had resisted all the wars—against the English, against the Spanish, against the Austrians; but it could not resist the German bombardment, which put it in the same state as the Château of Coucy. It also will remain a perpetual ruin.

The belfries of Comines and of Arras are also lost forever. The former dated from the fourteenth century, and had a historic value great to every Frenchman, for it belonged to the charming château where was born the celebrated historian Philippe de Comines. But how speak of the second, seventy-five meters high, which dominated the Hôtel de Ville of Arras, and which was a veritable artistic joy, with its carved colonnades, its wonderful chimes dating from 1434, and its beautiful platform on which stood a colossal lion? These belfries, where of old, in the Middle Ages, guards were placed to watch over the countryside, and from which pealed a bell to summon to meeting the citizens and notables, existed hardly anywhere except in the north of France and in Belgium. Practically speaking, there are none to be seen south of the Seine. Their destruction, therefore, is all the more to be regretted.

The Hôtel de Ville of Noyon is another irreparable loss. Noyon, the bridge city closest to Paris (M. Clemenceau kept

repeating for three years, "We must not forget that the Germans are still at Noyon"), prided herself on two works of art: her Gothic Cathedral, constructed in the twelfth century, which resembled the Basilica of St. Denis, and was the first Gothic cathedral built in France, with all its annexes, its cloister, its treasure-room, and its library; and the Town Hall, which was part Gothic and part Renaissance. At the cost of great effort the Cathedral can perhaps be restored; but for the Town Hall, which was reduced to bits, all work would be in vain; it must be considered dead forevermore.

Gone also is the delightful House of the Musicians at Rheims, with its five alcoves framing four high, wide windows. Each alcove contained the silhouette of a musician, larger than nature. The first was playing a drum, the second a bagpipe, the third held a falcon in his hand, the fourth played a harp, and the fifth a violin. The five statues have been saved, but the charming house, which belonged to the Brotherhood of Fiddlers of Rheims, has been reduced to bits by the heavy shrapnel fire. Never again will the statues return to their alcoves.

To sum up, more than thirty churches, all classed as historic monuments, have been totally destroyed, and the Fine Arts Administration has given up even the consideration of their possible reconstruction. Let us cite notably the church of Atlain-Saint-Nazaire in Pas-de-Calais, the church of Tracy-le-Val in Oise, the church of Givry in the Ardennes, and the church of Laffaux in Aisne. Particularly tragic is the fate of the church of Laffaux, which, built in the twelfth century, was ornamented with ancient mural paintings. Misfortune willed that it should be situated in the very center of the plateau of the Chemin des Dames, and of it there remains not the slightest vestige. The grass and the weeds have grown over what once were the church, the mill, and the village of Laffaux. And a sign, stuck into the naked ground, bears this simple and terrible inscription: "THIS WAS LAFFAUX."

Such is the list of the monuments that might be called the war's great dead; no trick of architecture will ever make them live again.

The list of the great injured is not less painful, for here are to be found the most illustrious artistic glories of France—and among them the five magnificent cathedrals of Rheims, Soissons, Noyon, Verdun, and Saint-Quentin, the delightful Abbey of Saint-Vaast, the Gothic churches of Peronne, of Roye, of Etain, and of Saint-Mihiel, and the town halls of Arras, of Verdun, and of Saint-Quentin.

At the disposition of the five cathedrals have been placed the most eminent





Wide World Photos

THE HOTEL DE VILLE AT ARRAS AFTER THE GERMAN INVASION





(C) Underwood & Underwood

THE HOTEL DE VILLE AT ARRAS AS IT WAS BEFORE THE GERMAN INVASION



architects of France and the best crews of workmen. All of the work for fifteen months past has consisted principally in preventing the further deterioration of such parts as are still standing. The basilicas have had to be protected against the rain and the wind; the supports and the walls which threatened to crumble have had to be propped up; the scattered stones and sculptures have had to be brought back, catalogued, and labeled; in a word, it has been necessary to save the still healthy members of the glorious wounded. The work of reconstruction, properly speaking, will hardly begin before next year. But what should be remarked from now on is that even when we shall have succeeded in restoring completely the Cathedral of Rheims, the Basilica of Noyon, or the Collegiate of Saint-Quentin, there will always be lacking to these three historic marvels precious things, and things which cannot be replaced. The sculptured figures and the carvings that decorated the façade of the Cathedral of Rheims will always be lacking; forever lacking will be the burned books of the library of the Basilica of Noyon; there will lack the paintings which walled the Hôtel de Ville of Saint-Quentin, and which were blackened, soiled, discolored, purposely by the Germans during the four years of their occupation; above all, there will be lacking a great part of the panes of colored glass—perhaps the most beautiful in France—of the Cathedral and of the Church of Saint-Rémi at Rheims, of the Collegiate of Saint-Quentin, and of the Church of Saint-Jean at Roye.

The art of making colored glass was an art essentially French and special to the Middle Ages. All the patience of the

monks and of the artisans of long ago was needed to give to this work the indispensable attention to detail and long-continued effort. In fact, from the eighth century all Europe came to France to admire the work in colored glass, and the French glass-workers were in demand in England, in Germany, and even in Scandinavia. It was in the fourteenth century that the discovery of silvered yellow, which allows a brilliant yellow tone on a neutral background, brought to its height the art of making colored glass. The glass-workers then found new colorations and new *motifs* for decoration; they gave vigor to their figures, on backgrounds ever clearer; they dressed their people in garments bedizened, embroidered, treated with a surprising skill; they tripled or quadrupled the panes of glass in order to multiply the shades. In a word, they obtained the effects of striking portraits. After that, the use of colored glass diminished or was lost. In the seventeenth century there remained hardly any *ateliers* except those of Troyes, which still produced a few interesting examples. In the eighteenth century these shops too were closed. To-day the artistic pane is still produced, but there is nothing to compare with the religious glasswork of four hundred years ago. We have not the time, and machinery has killed individual art. Thus we understand what an irreparable loss is even the partial destruction of a rose window such as that of the Apostles at Rheims, or the pulverization of the glasses of Saint-Quentin. These will never be replaced, any more than we could replace a picture by Titian or a canvas by Michael Angelo. The Cathedral of Rheims and the Collegiate of Saint-Quentin will never be more than

palaces without windows, like the faces of some women which are without expression.

Let us sum up. And, to recapitulate as well as possible, it is best to give the floor to the Director of French Fine Arts, M. Paul Léon.

"We must count," he told me, "twenty years before the artistic ruins of the north of France can be restored. And for that we will need five thousand workmen, sculptors, molders, and experts. The cost will be more than a billion francs. Forty monuments never can be restored and are lost for all time. A hundred and fifty cathedrals, churches, and town halls will remain eternally mutilated. The Cathedrals of Rheims and of Soissons will never again see some of their sculptures and all of their colored glass. The Town Hall of Arras will never again see its wainscoting, its chairs, its chandelier, or its embossed chimneys. Three-quarters of the work of eight centuries in Flanders, in Picardy, and in Artois can be considered as totally destroyed. France is poorer by four hundred *chefs-d'œuvre*, which nothing can ever replace."

M. Paul Léon told me this of a warm spring morning, while the sun gilded with its rays the Louvre, that other artistic glory of France. By the open window the birds were to be heard singing and business men were to be seen reading the newspapers. Perhaps they were reading the latest important speeches of the principal statesmen of Europe, assuring us that we must aid the rehabilitation of Germany—of the Germany that has done all this, and that has not lost a pane of glass from one of her churches or a stone from one of her monuments.

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## KNOLL PAPERS

BY LYMAN ABBOTT

### YOU OWE THE WORLD A LIVING

**T**HERE is an oft-quoted saying, "The world owes me a living." This is not true; the reverse is true: You owe the world a living. We cannot live without food, clothing, and shelter, and half the world must furnish food, clothing, and shelter for the other half.

There are the children. In a well-ordered society no child should be compelled to provide food, clothing, and shelter for himself. It is not enough to prohibit child labor. Some one must labor for the child or he will starve. The first third of his life ought to be spent in preparing to live. Common consent has agreed on twenty-one as the age at which the boy ceases to be a boy in the care of others and becomes a man able to care for himself.

At the other extremity of life is old age. Threescore years and ten is by common consent fixed upon as the legitimate end of industrial activity. One whose life has been well ordered may continue useful productive work thereafter; but no

man after seventy should be under compulsion to work in order to live. A half-century of compulsory toil is enough.

There are men whose work is necessary to society but is not producing food or clothes or shelter. Their service is ministry to the spirit, not to the body. Such are the doctors and nurses who care for us when we are sick; the teachers who gather from experience of the past lessons for our guidance in the future; the ministers who interpret to us the laws of the moral order and inspire in us the spirit of faith, hope, and charity; and, above all others, the mothers. It is true that most mothers provide food and clothing by their labors in the kitchen and with the needle; but that mother must be a rare genius who can adequately do such household work unaided and also furnish that spirit of love and peace which distinguishes a home from a boarding-house.

Finally, there are always in the world a certain number of sick, lame, halt,

blind, and incompetent, who must be cared for by their more fortunate neighbors. To-day there are in Europe thousands whose means for productive industry have been destroyed by the war, who must be fed, clothed, and sheltered by our labors or perish with cold and hunger.

We hear much about a living wage. A living wage is not enough. Industry ought to be so reorganized that every worker would be able to earn not only his own support, but something to contribute to the support of others.

We hear much about old-age pensions. Society ought to be so reorganized that every worker would be able to acquire his own pension for his old age.

Some reorganization of our industrial system is desirable, but we do not need to wait for such reorganization in order to become contributors to the general welfare. The ministers preach the duty of benevolence. I wish they would preach a little more the personal duty of thrift—